SPORTS

Taking stock of the Chiefs, and looking ahead 1B

ARTS+CULTURE

Sudeikis helps a buddy raise money for a good cause 1C

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Decreasing clouds 51°/38° See 12B

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

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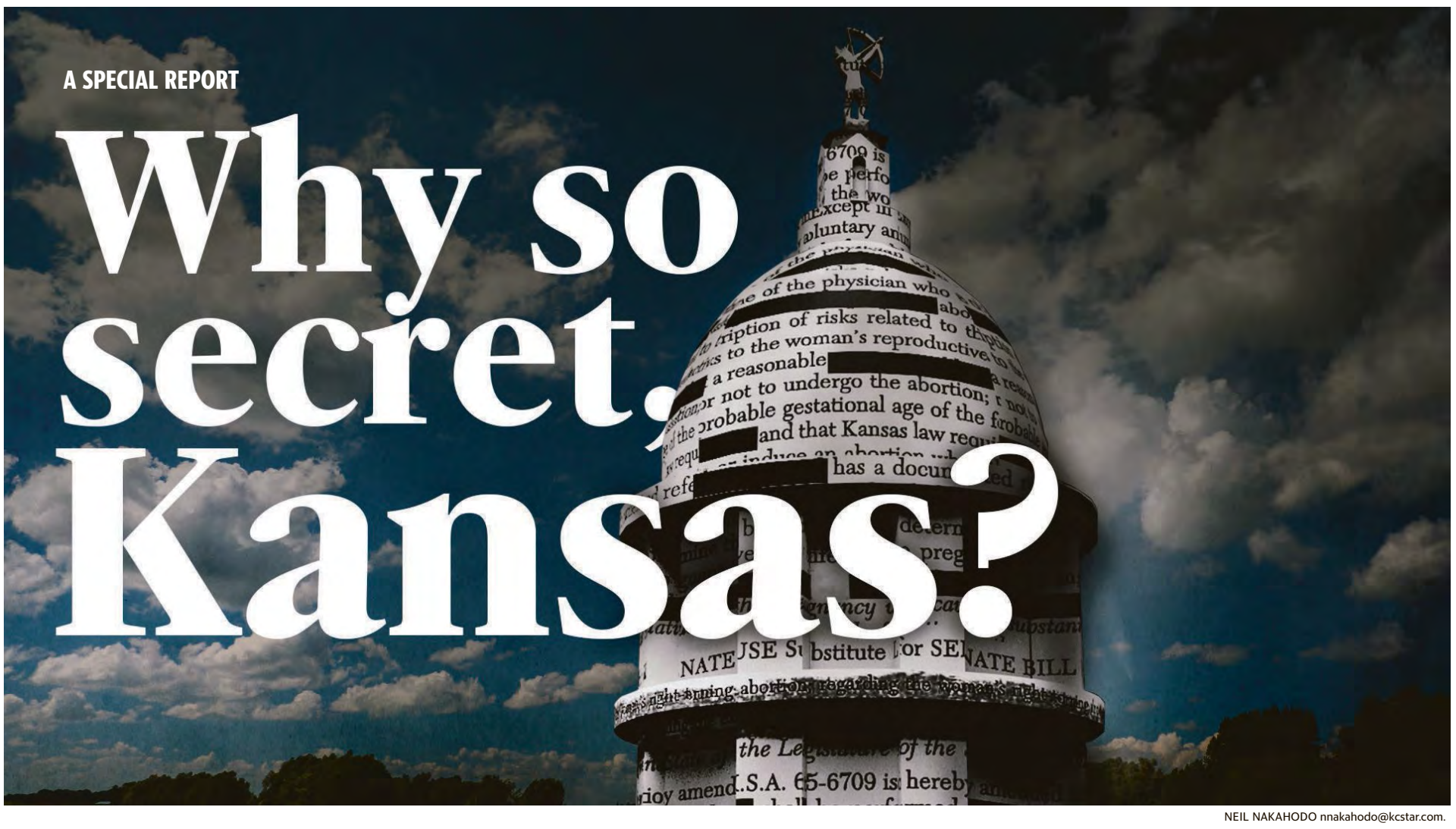


NEIL NAKAHODO nnakahodo@kcstar.com.

'One of the most secretive, dark states in the country' and 'people have no idea this stuff is going on'

BY LAURA BAUER, JUDY L. THOMAS AND MAX LONDBERG
The Kansas City Star

The statement was simple. Factual.

A Kansas spokesperson was acknowledging that the state highway department didn't have the money to rebuild a dangerous stretch of Interstate 70 that had been the scene of multiple wrecks and a grisly motorcycle fatality caught on video.

"KDOT has lost a lot of money over the last few years," the spokesperson said. "There's just no funding at this point."

Simple, yes. But in Gov. Sam Brownback's cash-strapped administration, those were fighting words. Days later, the spokesperson was fired.

"Your article was the nail in my coffin for being the face of KDOT," the spokesperson said in an email to The Kansas City Star.

The terminated employee, who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal, had learned what it meant to cross the line — the one where the state of Kansas doesn't discuss public business with Kansans.

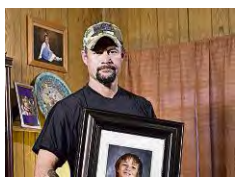
Kansas runs one of the most secretive state governments in the nation, and its secrecy permeates nearly every aspect of service, The Star found in a months-long investigation.

From the governor's office to state agencies, from police departments to business relationships to health care, on the floors of the House and Senate, a veil has descended over the years and through administrations on both sides of the political aisle.

"My No. 1 question to anybody who opts in favor of nondisclosure is, 'What are you trying to hide from us?' " said former Rep. John Rubin, a Johnson County Republican, calling Kansas "one of the most secretive, dark states in the country in many of these areas."

SEE SECRECY, 14A

COMING UP



Monday

Many say that as children die, a state agency charged with protecting them instead focuses on itself.

Tuesday

Lawmakers hide their roles in legislation, and controversial bills pass outside the public's eye.

Wednesday

Want to see what a police body camera captured? In a state where officers avoid scrutiny, good luck.

Thursday

Some of the state's most vulnerable patients have suffered since Kansas privatized its Medicaid system.

A movement grows to keep kids from smartphones until the eighth grade

BY RICK MONTGOMERY
rmontgomery@kcstar.com

More times than she can count, Krista Boan has sat behind the wheel tapping on her phone while waiting to pick up her children at Stilwell Elementary.

This, from a mom of four who has come to believe that youngsters should not be given smartphones before they reach eighth grade.

Boan thought she might be alone in her beliefs until she discovered a new national campaign called "Wait Until 8th." She emailed some parents at Stilwell asking them to join and 40 signed up.

Then it struck her that she needed to set down her own phone. Instead of staying in her car at school, she got out and stood beneath an oak tree to chat with people face-to-face.

"In reviewing my own life, I realized I'd come to depend too much on my phone and social media to make my connections," she said.

Now, a Facebook site that Boan launched in September, "Wait a Bit Kansas City," is stoking a movement: 1,000

SEE PHONES, 17A

IN DEPTH

STUDENTS CARRYING GUNS HAS BECOME PART OF SCHOOL CULTURE

Fewer schools use metal detectors to catch kids sneaking in guns. Instead they count on a "see something, say something" school code. **12A**

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